

States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Brassfield Baptist Church

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Location**

street & number Intersection of NC Rte 96 & State Road 1700  not for publication

city, town Wilton  vicinity

state North Carolina code NC county Granville code 077 zip code 27522

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>2</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic & Architectural Resources of Granville County, N.C.

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

William S. King Jr. 6-14-88

Signature of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**National Park Service Certification**

hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**Function or Use**

Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Religion: religious structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
Religion: religious structure

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick  
walls weatherboard

roof metal  
other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1 DESCRIPTION

The oldest church building in Granville County, and one of its most finely finished, Brassfield Baptist Church was built in the early 1840s in the popular Greek Revival style. The congregation's approximately 4.75 acres of land, all acquired by 1870, includes the church building and a contributing cemetery to its north, which was started in 1924 and enclosed with a wire fence in 1929.<sup>1</sup>

The two-story, heavy timber frame, rectangular structure turns a gable front entry to the north. Beaded weatherboards side this elevation, which is topped, in Greek Revival temple front fashion, with a triangular pediment filled with flush boards. The double-doored, centered entry retains its original crosssetted surround, though the surround of the single window above it has apparently been altered; the pedimented porch, too, is not original, but a mid-twentieth century addition. Crossettes still enframe the openings of the other three elevations, but the most striking, and visible, elevation is the long expanse of the building's western side, which looks out upon Route 96. Topped by a boxed cornice that terminates in decorative patternboards, this elevation features four symmetrically placed, crosssetted surrounds, four at the first floor and four above. Two of the upstairs openings are permanently shuttered, for their windows were removed when alterations were made to the gallery in the 1920s.

Restored in the 1950s, the sanctuary retains the earliest and finest intact interior of any non-residential building in the county. At the main floor, the original high backed wooden pews are still in place, including the partitions that once separated male and female parishioners. Also still in place are flat-angled surrounds, coat rails and flush-sheathed wainscoting, the most common type of wainscoting found in antebellum Granville County. Octagonal handrails flank the stairs leading to the former slave gallery, which is supported, along with the sanctuary's roof, by octagonal posts. A favorite shape of the Greek Revival in the county, the octagon is now most often found at exterior porch posts and railings. Running between the octagonal post, marking the front edges of the gallery, are raised panels. Simple raised rectilinear surrounds enframe the gallery windows.

The first reported alterations to the church took place in 1887, when it received a new coat of paint, an interior cleaning

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and, in place of wood shingles, a tin roof, much of which is still in place. In the 1920s the front half of the gallery was removed, as were the exterior stairs that stood at the northeastern side of the building. In 1937 memorial windows were installed in the downstairs section of the sanctuary. Two Sunday School rooms were built and attached by a porch to the east side of the building in 1956 and in 1967 the wing to their rear was added.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "A History of Brassfield Baptist Church," August 21, 1983.

<sup>2</sup> "A History of Brassfield Baptist Church," August 21, 1983.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

early 1840s

Significant Dates

early 1840s

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Brassfield Baptist Church is significant historically as the oldest intact church building in Granville County, raised early enough - almost certainly in the early 1840s - to have included a slave gallery, which it still retains. (See Historic Context I - The Plantation Era in Granville County, 1746-1865) Its rich Greek Revival style finish, particularly its crosssette-adorned west facade and handsomely detailed sanctuary, is architecturally significant as the county's finest and least altered non-residential example of the style. Indeed, the sanctuary is the earliest intact example of a non-residential interior in the county and one of the few interiors surviving from before the Civil War. (See associated Property Types 2 - Greek Revival and Romantic Style Dwellings - and 5.A. - Plantation Era Commercial, Industrial, Institutional and Religious Buildings) See Property Type Addendum Sheet, Religious Buildings, for evaluation of the significance of surviving historic churches in the county.

In 1805 the commissioners of a multi-denominational meeting house leased one acre of land from George Brassfield and Mary P. Clement [Deed Book S, Page 109]. This acre is still owned by the church, located at the north end of its property and largely occupied by the cemetery. The Brassfield Baptist Church was officially constituted on August 23, 1823, its home a meeting house recently raised on the leased acre. In the early 1840s, a time of major growth for the church, the congregation acquired title to the land upon which they were to raise the present building. One acre of land was deeded to them for "natural love and affection" by Caleb Brassfield in 1841 [Deed Book 11, Page 364] and an additional 3 1/2 acres were acquired a year later from Anthony Clement, the son of Mary B. Clement, for the minimal sum of \$7.00 [Deed Book 11, Page 364].<sup>4</sup> The church acquired a final 3/4 acre tract in 1870 from John P. Lawrence for \$5.00. The property, through alterations in road patterns and other changes, is now 4.75 acres.

Although no record of the construction of the present church survives, all evidence indicates that it was raised between 1841 and 1846. The Greek Revival style finish of the building conforms with the finish of extant dwellings raised in the county in the 1840s and 1850s. A construction date prior to the early 1840s would be surprising, for the Greek Revival style was rarely expressed in the county in the fashion of the church prior to that time. This architectural evidence, coupled with the rapidly expanding size of the congregation - it doubled from 41 to 82 between 1838 and 1840<sup>5</sup> - and the dates of its first land

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purchases, indicate that the church was not raised before 1841 or 1842. Church records, complete after 1846, make no mention of the construction of a church, so the building was almost certainly standing by that date.

The congregation, which included both black and white parishioners, continued to grow throughout the 1840s and 1850s. In 1855 its black membership, which had to enter its gallery by a separate stair, was 45. Three years later the congregation's total membership reached a high of 201 persons.

The Greek Revival style finish of the church is noteworthy for its age, intactness and execution. At its front elevation, the north gable end facade, the building features a triangular pediment filled with flush boards, a simply articulated but unquestionable example of a temple front design. The building's most striking elevation is its long west facade, which features eight crosssetted window frames. Two of these surrounds, those at the two-story tall south pulpit end of the sanctuary, enframe permanently closed shutters, the windows behind them removed during alterations to the gallery in the 1920s.

Inside, the church looks much as it did before the Civil War, when slaves still worshipped in the gallery. Remaining original features include octagonal handrails and posts - a favorite shape of the Greek Revival in the county - flat-angled surrounds, flush-sheathed wainscoting and even the original pews. Though reduced in size in the 1930s, the slave gallery is still largely intact, having been restored with the rest of the interior in the 1950s.

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<sup>1</sup>Part of the Amis Chapel Baptist Church in northern Granville County, built in 1855, still stands, though it is used as an outbuilding. The intact National Register nominated Salem Methodist Church, built in central Granville County in 1860-1861, also still stands.

<sup>2</sup>"A History of Brassfield Baptist Church," August 21, 1983. published by the Church in association with its 160th anniversary, this pamphlet is a carefully researched, reliable history prepared by Mr. A. S. Woodlief in 1973.

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<sup>3</sup>"The History of Brassfield Church" by G. L. Allen, a short typed history located at Volume 49 of the Hays Collection.

<sup>4</sup>Not atypically for Granville County, where early recording practices were often indifferent, the 1842 deed was recorded on the same day as the 1841 deed.

<sup>5</sup>By contrast, the church's original 19 member 1823 congregation had dropped to 18 by 1830. "A History of Brassfield Baptist Church," August 21, 1983.

<sup>6</sup>"A History of Brassfield Baptist Church," August 21, 1983.

<sup>7</sup>Interview with Garland Catlette, November 2, 1987.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property approximately 4.75 acres

UTM References

A 

1	7
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7	1	8	2	6	0
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3	9	99	2	4	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of Brassfield Baptist Church is the entire 4.75 acre parcel on which it is located, as shown in the accompanying 1980 survey map of the property.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include the church and the cemetery that have been historically associated with the property and maintain historic integrity. The boundaries follow legally recorded boundary lines.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Marvin Brown/Architectural Historian & Patricia Esperon/Historian  
 organization Granville County-Oxford Historic Survey date 12/3/87  
 street & number P.O. Box 1556 (State Hist. Pres. Off.) telephone 919-693-1491  
 city or town Oxford state NC zip code 27565

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"A History of Brassfield Baptist Church." August 21, 1983.  
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anniversary, this pamphlet is a carefully researched and  
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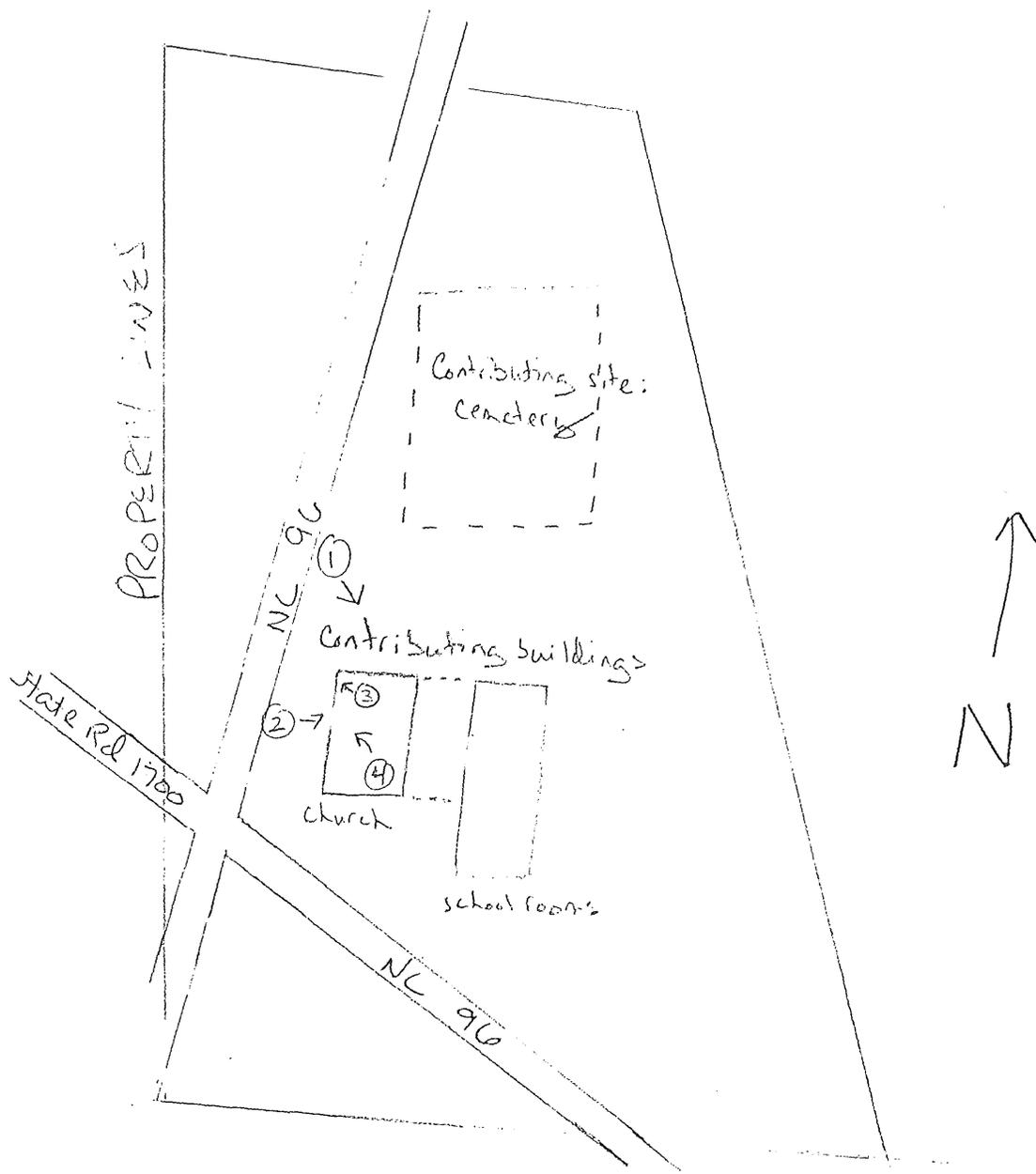
Allen, G. L. "The History of Brassfield Baptist Church." This  
short typed church history is preserved in the Hays  
Collection at Volume 49.

"Brassfield Links History With Early Baptists." Oxford Public  
Ledger, November 11, 1982.

Granville County Deeds. Granville County Courthouse, Oxford,  
N.C.

Hays, Francis B. Unpublished collection of 135 scrapbooks on  
Granville County history located at the Richard H. Thornton  
Public Library, Oxford, N.C.

Interview with Garland Catlette, November 2, 1987.



BRASSFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH  
 Granville County, N.C.

Approximately 4.75 acres

Approximate scale 1" = 100'

Brassfield Baptist Church

Granville County, N.C.

Quad: Grissom, N.C.

Scale 1":24,000

A: 17 716780 3999240

STATE OF NC  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURA  
RALEIGH, NC

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5256 11 NW  
(5-7EM)

78°37'30" 714000m.E. 715 716 717 35' 718 OXFORD 15 MI. WILTON 13 MI. 52  
36°07'30" 716780 716780 716780 716780 716780 719 (W)

JOHN P. LAWRENCE  
PLANTATION  
QUAD: GRISSOM  
SCALE: 1":24,000

- A 17/3999440 716780
- B 17/3999440 716680
- C 17/3999080 716680
- D 17/3999140 716820
- E 17/3999350 716820
- = 17/3999350 716780

